

CHAPTER THREE

And They Grew and Waxed Strong

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Such was the case in Provo Valley as Spring came in 1860. Those who had endured their first winter in the valley eagerly set out to plant new crops, improve their log homes and visit once again in the lower valleys.

As better weather came, so also did an influx of new settlers. News that grain crops had matured encouraged many to come, and others were anxious to secure homes and water rights while good land was still available. They came for many reasons, but each possessed a pioneering spirit and each heart burned with the desire to carve from the earth a piece of freedom—freedom from want and freedom to worship God.

Before the original group left Provo City in 1859 they had appointed William Meeks as their leader. He never established a home in the valley and so early in the Spring of 1860 William Madison Wall was appointed as presiding elder in the valley. He chose as his counselors John M. Murdock and James Laird. Since all those in the valley were Latter-day Saints they looked to their Church leaders as legislative and judicial officials also.

As summer came in June of 1860 there were more than 200 people living and working in the new valley. The greater part of what was called the "North Field" was put into cultivation and good crops were raised.

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Some suggested that a bowery should be built in which to hold a celebration. However, John M. Murdock, counselor to Elder Wall, said that with just a little more effort a meeting house could be built. This structure would serve not only as a Church but also as a school building, a dance hall, a theatre and for all kinds of community gatherings.

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History of Heber Fort Log School and LDS Meeting House

The structure was erected inside the fort string of houses and was 20x40 feet in size. A large open fireplace and chimney was built in each end, large enough to take logs of wood three to four feet long. It was the assignment of the Deacons to keep logs on the fire. Families took turns making and furnishing candles for the meetings.

Even though the building was built of logs and had only a dirt floor and hand-hewn furniture, the people rejoiced for it and gave thanks for its protection and its purpose whenever they met within its walls.

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When he learned of the decision to name the new community after him, President Kimball came to the town and met with the people. In his remarks he is reported to have said:

"Now you people have named your little town after me. I want you to see to it that you are honest, upright citizens and good Latter-day Saints that I may not have cause to be ashamed of you."

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Because the animals grazed on open range lands during the summer months it also became necessary to build fences around the various sections of land that were under cultivation so that the cattle would not ruin the precious crops.

The need for fences gave rise to a curious political office—that of fence viewer. These officials were elected and given authority to compel people, if necessary, to build and keep in repair their fences. Estimates were made and it was determined that a rod of fence for each acre of land was required to enclose the field. Each person was responsible for his own land and fences. The most common type of fence was the "worm fence" or zig-zag construction that required no nails or wire to build.

Everyone was kept extremely busy during this time in making roads into the canyons so that fence poles could be brought out and logs could be obtained for building. Hay also had to be provided from the range lands for cattle during the long winter.

As harvest time came the early frosts again plagued the people. Even though the frosts caused the wheat to shrink somewhat, it was still suitable for flour. It was during the harvest season in 1860 that the first threshing machine was brought into the county.

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to the valley. It was small and threshed very slowly, using horses as its source of power. When the grain had been through the machine it still had to be run through a fanning mill to separate the kernels from the chaff. This mill was hand operated and also very slow. As a result, some of the grain did not get harvested before winter set in.

The prospects of winter seemed less bleak that year for there were many more people in the valley and more adequate preparations had been made. To help the time pass more quickly, a dramatics group was organized. Some very good plays were produced with John Crook, James Duke, C. N. Carroll, John Gallagher and John Jordan taking the leads.

The saints also could look forward to regular Church services on Sundays in their new meeting house. A choir was organized to help with the music and John Crook, talented in many lines, served as the choir leader.



JOHN CROOK
Original Settler and Early Historian

Schools were also conducted during the winter months for the education of the people. John M. Young was the first school teacher and the classes were held in the meeting house with students sitting on rough benches or stools using make-shift desks fastened to the walls.

There were other interests in the new valley, too, for the records show that on Christmas Day, 1860, Charles C. Thomas claimed as his bride, Emmaline Sessions. They were married by Thomas Rasband in the first ceremony to be performed in the valley. That evening another couple, Harvey Meeks and a Miss Dougal were married at Center Creek by Silas Smith.

According to John Crook's journal, those who spent the winter of 1860-61 in the fort with their families were:

North Side: John Carlile, John Crook, Thomas Rasband, James Carlile, Fred Giles, Robert S. Duke, Willis Boren, James Davis, Robert Broadhead, Hyrum Oaks, Alfred Johnson, Sam Rooker, William Dameron, James Lamon and John Lee.

East Side: Alex Sessions, Richard Jones, Elisha Thomas, Bradford Sessions, Isaac Cummings, Darwin Walton, John Cummings Sr., Charles N. Carroll, George Dameron, Bailes Sprouse, Thomas Hicken, George Thompson and Norton Jacobs.

South Side: Thomas Moulton, Patrick Carroll, William Forman, John Muir, John M. Murdock, Thomas Todd, Cal Henry and Robert Carlile.

West Side: Jane Clotworthy, Zemira Palmer, James Duke, James Laird, Cub Johnson, John Davis, Robert Parker, Terry Burns, William McDonald, John Hamilton, George W. Clyde, John Witt, Joseph S. McDonald, John Jordan, a Mr. Russell and John McDonald.

By the time Spring was welcomed in 1861 the community of Heber was recognized by Church leaders in Salt Lake City as being large enough to organize into a ward. Thus, early in 1861 Joseph S. Murdock was ordained as bishop of the new ward by President Brigham Young and sent from American Fork to Heber to take charge of Church affairs. He chose as his counselors John W. Witt and Thomas Rasband. John Hamilton served as ward clerk.

Bishop Murdock also served as presiding bishop of the valley and directed the Church efforts of presiding elders who were called in the small communities that had begun to spring up in the valley. These community developments are discussed separately in later chapters.

The year 1861 proved to be a year of many significant accomplishments. With Church activity on an organized basis and the individual homes as well fixed as possible for that time, the settlers began to look to community improvements.

Provisions were made for old and new settlers to plant vegetable gardens outside the fort. Ephraim Smith and William P. Reynolds built a chopper run by horse power to chop wheat for those who could not go to the mills in Provo. While it was still somewhat crude, the chopper was a great help to those who had been grinding their flour in small hand mills.

Another bridge was built over the Provo River, this one located six miles north of Heber on the road to Salt Lake City. A good wagon road was also made through Provo Canyon, with toll being charged for use of the road.

John M. Murdock organized a cooperative sheep herd in 1860 and cared for the sheep during the summer months himself. He was able to take the sheep far enough south to winter out so that they did not need special supplies of hay. This method of caring for the sheep enabled

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nearly everyone to have a few sheep to furnish wool for spinning and weaving into a cloth called "jean."

Production of the cloth was laborious. After the wool was sheared from the sheep it had to be washed and scoured, carded by hand into spools and then spun into yarn. If coloring was desired, tag alder, rabbit brush and indigo were used.

William Aird was the first community weaver, and received the yarn from the people for weaving. The wool had to be mixed with cotton yarn for warp to make the "jean" cloth. Practically everyone wore clothing made from this type of cloth.

Additional Church organization occurred in 1861 when John Young, a brother of President Brigham Young, came to Heber and organized the first High Priests Quorum. Elisha Averett was sustained as president of the quorum. He moved away in less than a year and John M. Murdock was appointed. Counselors were Thomas Todd and John Jordan with William Aird as clerk.

Up until this time in the valley's history there were two counties that claimed the Wasatch land. Utah County included the southern area of the valley and the northern part was in Salt Lake County. The dividing line ran through the valley about one mile south of Heber. The present cities of Heber and Midway were in Salt Lake County.

Early in 1862 the U. S. government created the Territory of Nevada out of the western part of the Territory of Utah. This made it necessary to revise some of the county lines in the remaining Utah area and the Territorial Legislature created 17 new counties in the state, one of them being Wasatch County.

The new county was bounded on the west by the summit of the Wasatch Range, on the north by Summit County, on the east by the territorial line between Utah and Colorado and on the south by Sanpete County.

A later legislative act described the county boundaries as follows:

"All of that portion of the territory bounded on the south by Utah and Sanpete Counties, west by Utah and Great Salt Lake Counties, north by the summit of the range of mountains south of the headwaters of the East canyon and Silver Creek, following said summit to the point where the road leading to Great Salt Lake City and Rhode's Valley crosses, thence south to the Provo River at the high bluff below Goddards' ranch; thence along the channel of said river to its head waters, thence easterly to the summit of the range of mountains north of Uintah Valley, thence along the last named summit and south to Brown's hole to the 32nd meridian west from Washington City and east by said meridian, is hereby made and named Wasatch County with county seat at Heber City."

It is believed that the Goddard's ranch mentioned is the present O'Driscoll ranch situated on the north side of the Provo River at the lower end of Kamas Valley.

With the establishment of a county, officers were needed to administer judicial affairs. John W. Witt was elected probate judge by the Territorial Legislature and on February 22, 1862 he conducted the first session of county court. The minutes of the first meeting are as follows:

REPORT OF THE COUNTY COURT OF WASATCH COUNTY IN THE TERRITORY OF UTAH

Special Term

John W. Witt, Presiding

The judge organized the county court by appointing the following officers: Thos. Todd, James Duke and John H. Van Wagoner, selectmen.

The court then proceeded to appoint John Harvey, assessor and collector; Snelling M. Johnson, sheriff; John M. Murdock, treasurer; John Sessions, surveyor; Thos. H. Giles, superintendent of common schools.

The court then divided the county into precincts as follows:

All that portion of country on the east side of Provo River hereby declared precinct No. 1 and all that portion of Provo valley on the west side of Provo River shall be called precinct No. 2. The court then appointed the following precinct officers: Thos. Aarban, justice of the peace for precinct No. 1; Zemira Palmer, constable. Norton Jacobs, justice of the peace for precinct No. 2; Sidney Epperson, constable.

Court adjourned until the first Monday in March next.

Judges fees	\$3.00
Selectmen	4.50
Clerks	2.50
	\$9.50

(signed)

J. W. WITT

Judge

THOMAS TODD

Selectman

CHAS. SHELTON

Clerk

When the names of county officials were presented to Brigham Young, acting governor of the territory, the name of John Hamilton was substituted for that of Snelling M. Johnson as sheriff, so Mr. Hamilton was actually the first sheriff of the county. The position of selectman was comparable to that of county commissioner today.

John W. Witt's term as probate judge continued until 1888, during which time many important events transpired in the county.

According to John Crook's journal the population in the valley at the time of county organization was over 1,000 persons. The largest

settlement, of course, was at Heber City, but there were also two small settlements along the Snake Creek, a number of families at Center Creek, some at Charleston, some in Round Valley or Wallsburg, a small cluster of houses at the Sessions spring and a few at a sheep ranch of Melvin Ross, afterwards known as Hailstone's Ranch, about eight miles north of Heber.

The first county road was established on March 3, 1862, and commenced at the Provo River below Manning's (southwest of the town of Charleston) and ran in a northerly direction following the old immigrant trail through the valley, passing by Melvin Ross' ranch and terminating at the northern boundary of the county known then as the Ross Summit.

Another county road was established April 26, 1862 and ran between Heber City and Center Creek and on to a sawmill in Center Creek Canyon.

Four school districts were also designated in April, 1862. They were district No. 1 to include Heber City; No. 2 at the Center Creek settlement; No. 3, the lower settlement on Snake Creek and No. 4 the upper Snake Creek settlement.

The first valuation of property for the county took place in 1862, and according to the report of John Harvey, assessor and collector, the property value in the valley was \$48,350.

Spring came late in 1862 and it was May 4 before any plowing could be done in the valley. The Church leaders who went to Salt Lake City for general conference sessions in April had to travel on snowshoes to get through the more than four feet of snow still on the ground.

Early in 1862 John H. Van Wagoner finished building a gristmill at Snake Creek's lower settlement. Even though there was no way to separate the smut from the wheat and some of the flour made was very dark, the people were still glad for this added improvement. At times that year the river was so high people couldn't get across to the mill. However, Henry McMullin, a ship builder from Maine, built a boat and the grist was taken back and forth on the boat. It was this same Mr. McMullin that built the first sawmill in the valley. It was owned by William M. Wall and James Adams and located in Center Creek Canyon.

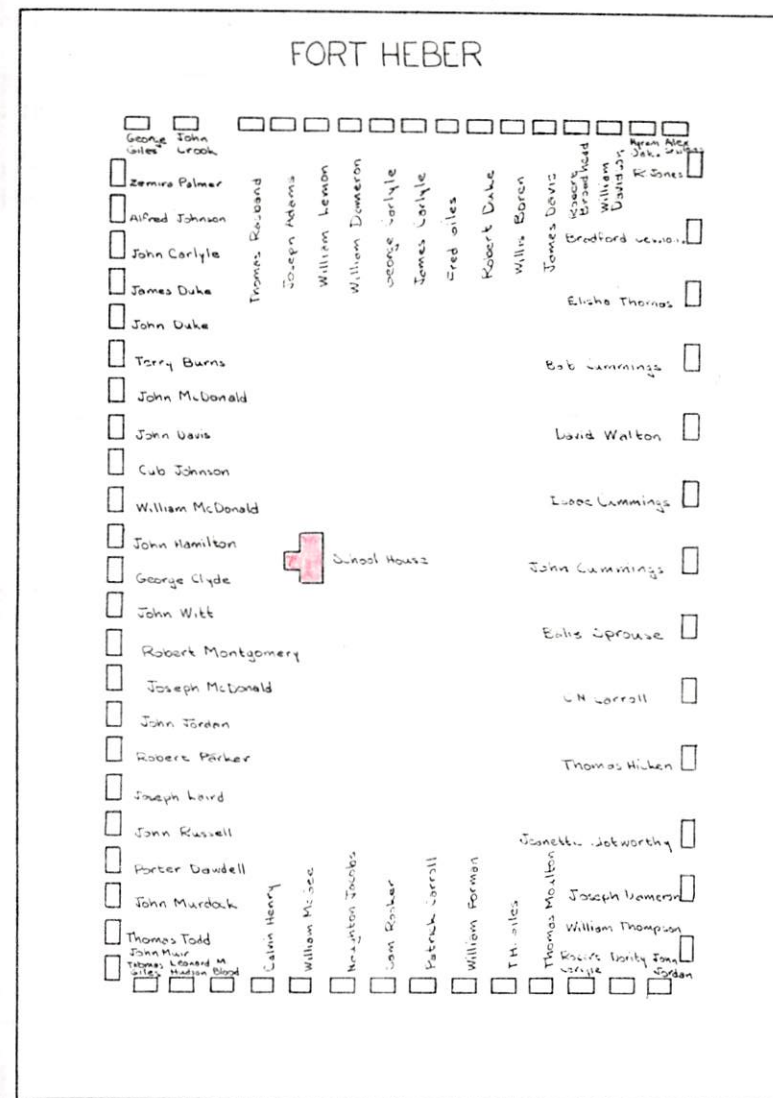
Until the sawmill was built, people had used hand-prepared timber for all their furniture and other needs. Now with cut lumber available the rough furniture was quickly discarded.

Many of the people were able to obtain good wagons from the soldiers in Johnston's Army. The army had camped near Utah Lake until the outbreak of the Civil War in the East. They were summoned to return to the Northern Army's camps and so they sold some of their wagons and their supplies very cheaply rather than carry them back east. Many in Wasatch County obtained the wagons as the troops passed through the valley on their eastern trip.

Community life was well developed by 1862 and the seeds of prosperity and growth planted so well by the early settlers in 1859 were already beginning to bear fruit. Living was difficult, but in overcoming privation and hardship these pioneers found a peace and contentment unequalled even in the modern world of conveniences and super-civilization.

It was completed by 24 July 1860 in time for the celebration of the LDS Saints coming into the SL Valley on 24 July 1847 - just 13 yrs prior. It was a combined meetinghouse & school

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The area for the fort was 80 rods square, lying between what is now First West and Fourth West Streets and 2nd North and 5th North Streets.

Within that fort area the company of men built their houses close together, with sufficient openings to let their stock in and out. The houses were built with green cottonwood logs that were cut on the river bottoms.

The structure was erected inside the fort string of houses and was 20x40 feet in size. A large open fireplace and chimney was built in each end, large enough to take logs of wood three to four feet long. It was the assignment of the Deacons to keep logs on the fire. Families took turns making and furnishing candles for the meetings.

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